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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines the procedures for a study that will focus on the information needs of the 22 Department of Sociology faculty members at Ball State University. By comparing needs of the sociology department with current holdings in the library, deficiencies in monograph and serial holdings are expected to be identified. Needs are defined here as the primary information sources students use to complete their coursework and the materials containing in-depth knowledge conducive to faculty research. Among the questions to be considered are whether the sources listed in course bibliographies of the Department of Sociology are available in Bracken Library, and whether the serials and monographs cited in the publications of current faculty members are available in the library. Following a review of the related literature and a brief historical background, the study procedures are defined in terms of population, data collection, data reduction, and data analysis. Finally, a 10-week timetable outlines the significant events in the study. A sample letter to faculty members is appended, and a 13-item bibliography is included. (THC)

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A COMPARISON OF THE INVESTIGATION AND CURRICULUM NECESSITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AT BALL STATE UNIVERSITY WITH BRACKEN LIBRARY RESOURCES

A RESEARCH PAPER

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR LIBRARY SCIENCE 565

by

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PREFACE

The author urges the reader not to reach conclusions beyond the scope of this research. Because this is a descriptive study, the reported percentage is merely an indicator of Bracken Library's coverage of the Department of Sociology's needs.

The individual reader will have to determine in his own mind whether or not the sociology department's needs are being met. For example, a finding of 80 percent coverage of the sociology department's needs by Bracken Library may seem adquate coverage to one reader, but not to another. Therefore, each researcher should feel free to set the significance level of his particular research as he deems appropriate.

I. THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Many user studies have been concerned only with the demand for information. Studies attempting to evaluate user needs involving information have not been dealt with to any great extent.

Only recently have researchers turned their thoughts to the concept of need instead of use. By focusing on needs, librarians and faculty can be drawn together in order to enhance the role of the library as a provider of information.

The arrival of the "information explosion" necessitates research into specific subject fields. Because of the enormous amount of documents to choose from, inflationary pressures, and resulting budgetary problems; academic libraries are going to have to be very critical of the material selected for their clientele.

This study specifically centers on the Ball State University Department of Sociology and the Bracken Library. By comparing the needs of the sociology department with current holdings in the library, deficiencies in monograph and serial holdings should be identifiable.

Choosing the Department of Sociology was not a random selection. On several occasions during the 1983-84 academic year, students have approached the reference desk at Bracken Library searching for journal titles not carried by the library. Through the reference interview, determination was made that the particular professor making the assign-

ment thought the journal was in the collection.

Past literature indicates sociologists tend to use library resources as secondary and tertiary means of obtaining information. Appel and Gurr (1964), in a survey of the bibliographic needs of social scientists, concluded that sociologists were much more likely to track down material through footnotes and journal bibliographies than to use abstracting journals or librarians.[1] Maurice B. Line (1971), in an overview of the INFROSS (Investigation into Information Requirements of the Social Sciences), stated similar findings.[2] He not only found references in books and journals to be the most used sources, but also stated that 24 percent of the social scientists surveyed never used abstracts or indexes.[3]

Statement of the Problem

The problem to be examined in this paper involves whether or not the research and teaching needs of the Department of Sociology, Ball State University, are being met by Bracken Library resources. These "needs" may defined as the primary informational sources students use to complete their coursework and the materials containing in-depth knowledge conducive to faculty research. At the present time, students and faculty of the Department of Sociology are apparently using other means to obtain informational needs.

In carrying out this study, the present investigator focuses on the following research questions:

1. Are the sources listed in the course bibliographies of the Department of Sociology in Bracken Library?

2. Are the serials and monographs cited in the publications of

current faculty members available in Bracken Library?

Importance of the Study

This study will indicate to the professional staff of Bracken Library the current needs of the Department of Sociology at Ball State University. Thus, deficiencies in current collection development policies may be analyzed and more appropriate selection criteria could be implemented to meet the Department of Sociology needs.

This researcher would also hope the faculty of the Department of Sociology would be encouraged to communicate with Bracken Library personnel concerning future collection evaluations. Furthermore, generalities pertaining to informational needs may be applied to other departments within Ball State University, or other academic libraries.

For instance, other departments within Ball State might study the course bibliographies and the monographs and serials cited in the publications of their instructors in an effort to determine needs. Other academic libraries, after taking into consideration their differences from Ball State, might undertake this study too.

Definition of Terms

Research needs---the lack of those general and in-depth materials that should be available to faculty for use in conducting investigation and experimentation.

Teaching needs---the lack of those materials useful in imparting classroom instruction and aiding students in completing course assignments.

Met---fulfilled, as in the faculty being able to conduct research or provide classroom instruction knowing monograph and serial literature

are available in Bracken Library for covering their informational needs.

Bracken Library Resources---all material housed within the physical walls of the main library or any of its branches. This excludes material obtained through interlibrary loan or computer search techniques.

Assumptions and Limitations

The following assumptions have been made in carrying out the present study. First, sociology faculty do use the resources available in Bracken Library. Second, the faculty members have published monograph or journal articles. Third, the needs of the faculty for particular materials of use in research and teaching are shown in their course bibliographies and published monographs or journal articles.

In addition to the preceding assumptions, two limitations should be noted. This study is concerned with Bracken Library's meeting the needs of the Department of Sociology, Ball State University during the 1983 academic year. No attempt is made to generalize the findings of this study to any other study or library situation.

Footnotes

[1]John S. Appel and Ted Gurr, "Bibliographic Needs of Social and Behavioral Scientists: Report of a Pilot Survey," American Behavioral Scientist 7 (October 1964): 52.

[2]Maurice B. Line, "The Information Uses and Needs of Social Scientists: An Overview of INFROSS," Aslib Proceedings 23 (1971): 417.

[3]Ibid.

II. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Historical Background

The question asking whether or not academic libraries are providing for the needs of their faculty and students is an old one. The question has been dealt with through user studies, collection analysis, circulation studies and many other means since World War II.[1]

Studies on the individual disciplines in the social sciences arrived much later. Paisley (1965), concluded that no previous user studies involving the social sciences existed at the time of his study.[2] Brittain (1970), found only eighteen studies of the social sciences existed in 1970, and only one of these dealt with sociology.[3]

The 1970s found an array of activity directed toward user studies in the social sciences and other educational disciplines. Many studies were undertaken for the purpose of reviewing circulation records. Surveys, interviews, case studies, and citation analysis were used as research techniques.

An experimental information service provided for social scientists at the University of Bath between 1969 and 1971 revealed that many social scientists have unsatisfied informational needs and react favorably to personalized services.[4] Many researchers consider this experiment to be a landmark activity concerning social science user studies.[5]

The INFROSS survey, mentioned previously, is also considered to be a landmark concerning social science user studies. Maurice B. Line (1971),

in the same overview mentioned previously in relation to the INFROSS survey, pointed out that less than one half of the social scientists surveyed used librarians as information providers.[6]

This startling information was followed by a large increase in attitude and awareness studies in the social sciences. A survey by Jerald Nelson (1973), found social scientists to possess a low level of reference awareness.[7] The survey was administered in questionnaire form to the social science faculties of six colleges and the average faculty member was found to be aware of only 50 percent of the reference services available to him in his college library.[8]

These findings continue to raise questions related to the social scientist's uses and needs concerning research and teaching material. Budd and DiCarlo (1980), asked the faculties of Northeast Louisiana University and Southern Louisiana University to rate, in order of importance concerning research and teaching, the following sources: "personal collection," "library," "colleagues' collection," "papers at professional meetings," and "conversations with colleagues."[9] "Personal collection" was the first choice; "library" finished a close second; and the remaining sources finished significantly behind.[10]

Other techniques have been used for evaluating collections and accessing needs. Still, many questions remain that need to be answered.

Review of Selected Studies

The University of North Dakota Library, in the spring of 1977, conducted a project to measure faculty perceived needs for 4,041 titles in the library's serial collection.[11] The various academic departments within the university were asked to provide ratings on the various serials relevant to

their own department. Forty-one departments took part in the evaluation.

A packet of forms representing the titles thought to be relevant to the various departments was delivered to them with a request that the completed forms, reflecting a unitary departmental rating, be returned by a certain date.[12]

When the forms were returned, each serial was represented by a master form for each title. The ratings were: "essential," "moderate value," "of marginal value," and "of no value."[13]

If one department put the journal in the "essential" or the "moderate value" category, the university would not cancel the subscription. Two hundred fifty-six titles did not receive one "essential" or "moderate value" vote and the cancelation resulted in a $8,920 savings on the budget.[14]

The preceding study represents one of the more simple ways libraries deal with collection development and faculty needs. It has been used at several universities in recent years.

Another study concerned with the use of serials by faculty was conducted at the university of Illinois during the fall of 1977. This study, unlike the former, takes the first step in evaluating faculty needs instead of use. The ultimate goal was to determine how the library might become the primary source used by faculty for research and teaching needs.[15]

The study was administered in survey format and designed by Stenstrom and McBride during 1977. The survey was sent to 226 faculty members from various social science departments. The overall return rate was 69 percent and the Department of Sociology ranked highest at 77 percent.[16]

The pretest questionnaire, unaltered for use in the study, consisted of twenty-one questions in four broad categories. The questions encompassed

patterns of use, usefulness of specified services, and miscellaneous information regarding the needs of the faculty.[17]

Summary statistics were created through the SPSS subprogram FREQUENCIES, using all of the available statistical analyses present.[18] Contingency table analysis of the data, using six variables, was done according to SPSS subprogram CROSSTABS and the Chi-square test of statistical significance was computed for all variables.[19]

Of those responding, 93 percent used serial literature, while only 7 percent had not used the serial collection during the previous academic year.[20] When they do not find a journal, their favorite option is to borrow from colleagues rather than request the item on interlibrary loan or ask the library to purchase it.[21]

The faculty were very enthusiastic about various suggested bibliographic services. More than half thought various applications of reference functions would be helpful.[22]

The majority of the faculty use the library as a secondary source for serial information and it is concluded that faculty members look to the library for less often used materials.[23] Suggestions are also made concerning the faculty's apparent unawareness of the many ways librarians can be of assistance to them.[24]

The final study to be mentioned here concerns a syllabus study by Linda K. Rambler (1979). The purpose of using a syllabus study is to contribute a workable solution to the problem of analyzing library receptiveness among subject areas or departments within the university.[25] The results should offer library administrators a concrete appraisal of which subject areas, course levels, and specific courses make use of

library resources.[26]

A random sample of 162 courses offered by an unnamed university was selected and the design for the analysis of the data emphasized compatibility with the analysis of Principia College Library (1978).[27] The university's winter course schedule of 1979 was used for selecting the courses.

A summary analysis displayed in number and percentage format shows that 63 percent of the courses demand no library use and only 8 percent of the remaining classes use the library heavily.[28]

A majority of the sampled classes at this institution are based on nonlibrary instruction modes and texts are involved in 52 percent of the modes.[29] One of the major conclusions drawn from this study is that library resources are underused. If half of the courses that currently require no library use were to be revised to make greater use of the library, in one year the library would have a potential increase in resource use of 31 percent.[30] Such figures would weigh heavily on already overworked reference staff.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Jan Wepsiec, "Secondary Information Services for Sociological Literature," Behavior & Social Sciences Librarian 2 (Summer 1983): 13.

[2]William J. Paisley, The Flow of Behavioral Science Information: A Review of the Research Literature, (1965), cited by John M. Brittain, Information and its Users (Claverton Down, Bath: Bath University Press, 1970), p. 146.

[3]John M. Brittain, Information and its Users (Claverton Down, Bath: Bath University Press, 1970), p. 146.

[4]John Cowley, ed., Libraries in Higher Education (London: Clive Bingley, 1975), p. 126.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Maurice B. Line, "The Information Uses and Needs of Social Scientists: An Overview of INFROSS," Aslib Proceedings 23 (August 1971): 417.

[7]Jerold Nelson, "Faculty Awareness and Attitudes Toward Academic Library Reference Service: A Measure of Communication," College & Research Libraries 34 (September 1973): 274.

[8]Ibid., p. 268.

[9]John Budd and Mike Dicarlo, "Measures of User Evaluations at Two Academic Libraries: Prolegomena," Library Research 4 (April 1982): 84.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Edward S Warner and Anita L. Anker, "Faculty Perceived Needs for Serial Titles: Measurement for Purposes of Collection Development and Management," The Serials Librarian 9 (Spring 1980): 295.

[12]Ibid., p. 297.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Patricia Stenstrom and Ruth B. McBride, "Serial Use by Social Science Faculty: A Survey," College & Research Libraries 40 (September 1979), p. 426.

[16]Ibid., p. 427.

[17]Ibid., p. 428.

[18]Ibid.

FOOTNOTES

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid., p. 430.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Linda Rambler, "Syllabus Study: Key to a Responsive Academic Library," Journal of Academic Librarianship 8 (July 1982): 155.

[26]Ibid., p. 156.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Ibid., p. 159.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid.

III. PROCEDURES

Population

The population for the present study consists of the twelve faculty members of the Department of Sociology, Ball State University, 1983-84. No sampling techniques are needed. The entire population of full-time and part-time faculty will participate in the study.

Data Collection

The major step in this research is to obtain the resumes and course bibliographies of the Department of Sociology faculty. This should be undertaken within the framework of professional courtesy. The department chairperson should be contacted and advised concerning the research project.

Once the chairperson has been informed, the individual faculty members will be contacted through a personal letter announcing the project and requesting an appointment for obtaining copies of their resumes, or a publications list, and course syllabi. The ending of the letter will contain a statement giving an approximate date and time of telephone recall. The Appendix contains a sample letter.

The date of recall will be four or five days after the mailing of the letter. Simple questions asked by the faculty can be answered during this conversation.

Finally, the meeting will take place and the resume and course syllabi will be obtained. More detailed information can be relayed to

the faculty at this time.

Data Reduction

The course syllabi and faculty resumes, or publications list, will be thoroughly examined. Those sources cited by the faculty members will be recorded on a separate sheet, or sheets, of paper. After all the accumulated data have been examined and the citations listed, a comprehensive list of the cited sources will have been formed.

Data Analysis

Analyzing the data of this research is simple. Involved is the use of descriptive statistics and a nominal-level measurement of the cited sources that are available in Bracken Library.

Nominal-level measurements refer to numerical values and represent only the classification of events.[1] Therefore, these numerical data serve only as labels and require no arithmetic operations.

The numerical values will then be converted to percentage format by multiplication of the proportion of available sources by 100.[2] This percentage of available sources will then be presented to Bracken administrators and the sociology faculty.

To obtain the proportion and ultimate percentage of cited sources available in Bracken Library, the compiled list of cited sources will be checked against Bracken Library resources. This will be accomplished by comparing the cited sources against the Bracken Library shelflist. A double-checking of the cited sources will be made by visual inspection of the Linedex (an alphabetic listing of journal titles carried by Ball State) and Card Catalogs I and II.

Finally, an attempt will be made to locate those items carried in the Bracken collection on the shelves.

Footnotes

[1]Ann E. MacEachron, Basic Statistics in the Human Services: An Applied Approach (Baltimore: University Park Press, 1982), p. 2.

[2]Ray L. Carpenter and Ellen Storey Vasu, Statistical Methods for Librarians (Chicago: American Library Association, 1978), p. 7.

IV. TIMETABLE

The entire procedure and methodology will take approximately ten weeks. The results can then be copied and given to the administrators in Bracken Library and the faculty of the Department of Sociology for consideration. The following is a weekly breakdown of events:

Week one ---Contact with the chairperson of the sociology department.
---Personal letter to all faculty members.

Weeks two and three ---Telephone contact with faculty.
---Secure and attend appointments and obtain course syllabi and resumes or publications list.

Weeks four and five ---Finish securing research material from faculty.
---List cited sources.
---Begin comparison with Bracken resources.

Week six ---Finish comparison with Bracken resources.
---Figure percentage of cited sources available.

Week seven ---Write rough draft.

Week eight ---Submit rough draft to advisor.

Week nine and ten ---Write final report.
---Submit findings to Bracken administrators and Department of Sociology faculty.

APPENDIX

Sample Letter to Faculty Members

Department of Library &
Information Science
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47305
September 10, 1984

Faculty Member,
Department of Sociology
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47305

Dear Faculty Member:

The essence of this letter is to request your cooperation and assistance in completing a research project. The project concerns the fulfillment of the Department of Sociology's needs by Bracken Library resources.

I will be contacting you by telephone early next week. The purpose of the conversation will be to arrange a meeting whereby I may obtain copies of your resume, or a publication list, and your course syllabi. At the meeting, I will answer any specific questions you may have concerning the project.

Sincerely,

Robert W. Humes

Robert W. Humes

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